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ABSTRACT

This article provides resources for school-community collaboration to support at-risk students and their families in rural settings. Rural schools and their communities must work together efficiently and economically to counteract problems such as geographic isolation, shortage of resources, economic decline, lack of political power and difficulties associated with living in a modern society. The article describes five regional and national resource organizations that support school-community collaboration. It provides information on activities, services, contacts, and phone numbers. The article also outlines state efforts in California and Utah and describes eight collaborative programs within the Far West Laboratory Region. The Far West Laboratory serves Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah in linking educators to share information, expertise, and innovative practices. It provides technical assistance to build local capacity for continued self-improvement. The program profiles illustrate that school-community collaboration should address both the needs of the children and the needs of the community. The last section contains an annotated bibliography of nine publications related to school-community collaboration. (LP)

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School-Community Collaboration in a Rural Setting: Sources and Profiles

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Loretta

Throughout grade school, Loretta was a model student, consistently achieving high grades. Shortly after entering high school her grades began slipping dramatically. While her performance in certain courses was erratic, she seemed to have most difficulty in mathematics and physical education (PE). It was very apparent that she did not like school. As her grades continued to slip, her number of unexcused absences increased. PE was said to cause "her significant emotional and psychological distress."

Loretta had become anorexic, brought on by a stressful home life. Her parents divorced during her freshman year, and she faced an alcoholic parent alone. Her senior year in high school Loretta became pregnant and dropped out.

Robert

Robert grew up in a poor family, with both parents and an older brother. At an early age Robert began exhibiting behavior problems. During a student assessment meeting at the elementary school, concern was raised over his defensive interactions, difficulty working with others, and alienating behavior. While his behavior continued to be an issue, his grades remained above average.

Robert's brother, six years older than he, also exhibited erratic, sometimes violent behavior. In fact, by the time he had reached high school he had been arrested several times for theft and the sale of drugs. As Robert grew older he too became involved in drugs and violations of the law. Robert was characterized as being a "wild kid," defiant, and acting out a lot to avoid direct confrontation with authority figures. This had become his defense mechanism against a physically abusive father.

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Introduction

Schools today are charged with educating a student population facing a multitude of problems in proportions never before encountered at the school site. Students come to school hungry and tired, exhibit untreated health problems, carry the emotional burden of single-parent homes, poverty and loneliness, and are faced with abusive parents and unsupportive environments. These troubled life experiences leave children academically unprepared for school; they are manifested through truancy, substance abuse, pregnancy, and other destructive behavior — including participation in gangs, vandalism and theft. Schools are ill-equipped and were not intended to manage the behavioral characteristics of today's at-risk students, nor the causes for them.

A myriad of social service agencies and community support programs exist to address and meet the needs of these children: academic, financial, health, employment and counseling. Services are delivered through a wide variety of channels. Through community organizations, a student may receive drug counseling and vocational support; state agencies may offer social and welfare services to both the student and family; city and county agencies may provide probation and juvenile services; and districts and schools may organize academic counseling and support programs. The type, location, and method of delivery of services vary greatly from agency to agency, community to community, and school to school. Duration, effectiveness, organizational structure, and coordination of services are equally varied. This makes for a fragmented, redundant, and, therefore, ineffective system of services. At times the agencies appear to work at cross purposes, or — when working toward the same goal — to be competing for limited resources.

In order to receive assistance, students like Loretta and Robert may face several bureaucratic institutions (including schools), assessment and referral processes and treatment programs. This is not only overwhelming, costly and discouraging, but inefficient as well. It is clear that schools and communities must work together if children are to overcome the difficulties with which they are confronted. Therefore, it is imperative to build a system of services which brings together agencies and community organizations in a collaborative, coordinated, case-managed, child-centered system that efficiently and economically serves children and their families with a focus on early intervention and prevention.

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This *Knowledge Brief* seeks to underscore the importance of school-community partnerships for the integration of services and to provide sources of information for schools to begin the process of collaboration. While much of what is contained herein is applicable to most settings, special attention will be given to the particular needs of rural schools and communities. Sources of service integration efforts are divided into three sections. The first describes regional and national resource organizations and provides contacts and phone numbers. The second section outlines state efforts and eight particularly promising collaborative efforts within the Far West Laboratory region. The last section contains an annotated bibliography of several especially informative publications.

Particular Needs of Rural Schools and Communities

Often rural schools are viewed as representing only a small part of the student population and their needs tend to be aggregated with those of surrounding urban areas. However, rural settings present special needs and circumstances that cannot be addressed with "urban" solutions. It is important, therefore, to examine local needs before undertaking collaborative efforts.

Four key characteristics differentiate rural from urban settings. First is distance. Rural schools and districts are often small and remote. Not only must many students travel far to school, but to special services as well. Services are far removed and are located in larger towns and metropolitan areas, making it difficult for direct service delivery. Second, due to lack of resources — both in terms of limited facilities and funding because of a low tax base — the assistance that does exist leaves a wide gap between needs and services. Due to the dearth of resources, students with special needs, such as the handicapped and learning disabled, cannot be served adequately.

A third characteristic distinguishing rural from urban areas is that a larger portion of rural children grow up in poor communities than do urban children. Communities are isolated and offer limited opportunities for growth beyond the rural areas. This can lead to high levels of frustration, stress and depression. Fourth, because of their relative small size and income levels, rural communities' efforts to organize and improve their predicament are thwarted by their lack of political clout.

Geographic isolation, paucity of resources, economic decline, and lack of political power call for the formation of trusting and lasting relationships between schools and their communities that will build on both their strengths. They must come together to support at-risk students and their families to face and overcome the difficulties presented by modern society, in general, and rural issues in particular. The following sections provide resources for schools and communities to begin the collaborative process.

National and Regional Resource Organizations

California Tomorrow: Youth At Risk Project. California Tomorrow's Youth At Risk Project convenes a network of service agencies, advocacy groups, and school representatives to improve coordination. The project also provides technical assistance to cities and counties in an effort to improve service delivery. In addition, the project is compiling a database of model collaborative efforts. For further information, contact Hedy Chang at (415) 441-7631.

Children's Defense Fund. The Children's Defens `nd (CDF) is a private, non-profit organization that focuses on issues affecting children. CDF staff include professionals from many fields, such as health, psychology, education, and welfare, who work collaboratively with state and local efforts to bring about positive change for children. CDF monitors policy at both federal and state levels, offers technical assistance to child advocacy groups, and pursues a legislative agenda. Contact Clifford M. Johnson at (202) 628-8787 for further information.

Far West Laboratory, Students At Risk Program. The Students At Risk Program (SAR) staff are working on two projects that address issues of collaboration and school-community linkages. In the first, A Study of School-Community Linkages for Students At Risk, profiles of promising models of interagency collaboration in Arizona, California, Nevada and Utah are being developed. The second project is an evaluation of the New Beginnings Demonstration Center in San Diego describe below. The evaluation will document and describe the implementation of the new system, recording changes that occur, and assess relevant outcomes for families, children, and the system itself. For further information contact Larry F. Guthrie at (415) 565-3010.

Joining Forces. Joining Forces supports collaborative efforts between schools and social service agencies. It is currently developing a national database on interagency collaboration efforts in the country. Program descriptions and strategies are available. For further information, contact Janet E. Levy at (202) 393-8159.

State Interagency Network. A statewide information-sharing and support network has been organized in California. The State Interagency Network brings together representatives from various county, state, national and private organizations and councils interested in the issues of integration and interagency collaboration. The Network meets quarterly to exchange information and share ideas and concerns about

interagency efforts throughout the state. For further information, contact Kent Paxton at (714) 387-8966.

State and Local Efforts

California: Interagency Children's Services Act (SB 997). The Interagency Children's Services Act adds to existing law authorizing establishment of youth services programs. SB 997 provides counties with the option to initiate coordination of youth services among various agencies. The legislation aims to foster integration of services at local levels. Collaboratives are charged with emphasizing prevention, allowing funding flexibility and local decision-making, providing child-centered services, minimizing administrative overlap, identifying gaps, and providing case management. The county boards of supervisors may establish a coordinating council which should be comprised of members of the various agencies and organizations providing services to children. This council is responsible for planning, oversight, identification of gaps, developing policies, and coordination of resources. Counties wishing to participate may request a waiver of "existing state regulations pertaining to single agency operations and auditing and accounting requirements which hinder coordination of children's services."

Utah: Early Intervention for School Success Program. In 1988, a Master Plan was formulated to address Utah's educational problems. The aim of the Master Plan was to foster the development of a suitable and relevant educational system for all students by providing a structure for change. The Master Plan identified several problems including lack of early intervention services, uneven availability and implementation of programs, and lack of coordination of services to students and families. The Plan recommended committing to coordination of agencies both on programmatic and fiscal levels, seeking and sharing of information, building mechanisms for involving parents and communities, and providing inservice training.

Following the Master Plan, the Early Intervention for School Success Program was developed. The program was started by legislation which mandated that three agencies — health, social services, and education — each contribute $100,000 to a grant program. Through the program, schools were able to apply for funding for school improvement projects. It is the intention of the Utah State Office of Education to study the process, progress, and outcomes of these school-level projects to determine which strategies are most effective for school improvement. The goal is replication in other schools.

Seven pilot sites were funded in 1988. Now entering its third year, the project is turning its focus to integration of services. The goal of the program is to develop a structured, integrated collection of services for at-risk students with the help of the health, human services, and education departments at schools presenting feasible proposals for integration.

While each site has developed plans for integration based on local needs, each site includes a coordinating council comprised of parents, agencies, school, and community people; and school case-management teams comprising school and agency people.

Children's Cabinet, Inc. (Reno, Nevada). The Children's Cabinet is a private, non-profit entity whose mission is to coordinate existing services for children and families and develop new programs to fill gaps in services. The Cabinet is a public-private partnership in terms of funding, staff and planning efforts. All services are provided from a multi-disciplinary, family-focused point of view and are provided in the community or at the Cabinet's Family Resource Center. Current programs include the Centralized Assistance and Referral (CAR) project, a School Early Intervention program, Family Preservation, Parenting Education, tutoring, and Homeless Youth Advocacy projects. The Children's Cabinet focuses community attention on the complex and inter-related problems of its constituency through extensive media work and its publications.

Elementary At-Risk Program (Ogden, Utah). For many years, Ogden elementary schools did not have counselors. As poverty levels increased, so did related problems; too many children were coming to school, hungry, dirty, tired, uncared for, and angry. Classroom teachers were unable to handle all the problems students were bringing to class. Rather than try to reinstate the traditional counselor approach, the district implemented a more clinical model: students are referred and assessed, families are involved, direct services are provided, and agencies work collaboratively on cases.

Each school building is assigned an at-risk staff member as case-manager, with no fewer than one staff for every two schools. These at-risk staff receive referrals from teachers and other staff, observe students in class, interview parents, and conduct psychological evaluations. Other roles of the case-manager include parent/teacher consultations, writing behavior management plans, making referrals to agencies, directing services (schedule, ensure service delivery), and providing follow-up.

In addition, the program is focussed on early intervention, actively seeking referrals from K-1 teachers. Teachers are taught to recognize symptoms of the at-risk student (e.g., acting out in classroom, failing to complete work, and

irregular attendance), as well as the less obvious signs of difficulties (e.g., abuse, neglect, depression). Once a month, representatives form various agencies and schools meet to discuss more difficult cases. Counselors and teachers are encouraged to attend to learn and observe.

Modesto City Schools (Modesto, California). Faced with a rapidly changing community — schools with 55 percent LEP, 60 percent AFDC recipients, and 95 percent students qualifying for free lunch — Modesto City Schools began to form partnerships to address the increase in problems students were bringing to school.

Initially, a partnership between the district and the police department was formed. It offers three services: DARE program, counseling and other support with school officers, and a truancy center. As time went on, similar partnerships were formed with probation, mental health, human services, Modesto Junior College, and California State University Stanislaus. Recently, the district has formed a relationship with social services to serve 100 students in a case-management capacity.

In addition, the public health department joined the partnerships in April. They will serve a "preventative wellness" function. That is, they will intervene on issues of health for the entire family, not just the child in school. For example, if a student has a baby sibling who needs to be immunized, the child will be identified as potentially at-risk before the he/she is of school age. The program began as a partnership between the schools and the police department.

New Beginnings (San Diego, California). A collaborative effort of the City of San Diego, County of San Diego, San Diego City Schools, San Diego Community College District, and the San Diego Housing Commission, New Beginnings is designed to change fundamentally the way in which services are delivered. Instead of the crisis-oriented and fragmented system that currently operates in many settings, New Beginnings is creating a new system that focuses on prevention and integrated services. Beginning Fall 1991, an integrated, school-based service delivery model is being developed based upon a feasibility study conducted at one school site. This model will allow for (a) improved registration and assessment of children and their families, (b) expanded services, (c) parent education and adult education classes, (d) a cadre of Family Services Advocates that provide ongoing services, and (e) connections to an Extended Team of supportive services providers at participating agencies.

Page High School (Page, Arizona). In Page, a town of 7000, students may travel as far as 80 miles (one way) to come to school. Faced with serious problems of alcoholism and pregnancy, Page High School began building a network of cooperative services to more effectively meet the needs of the community. Starting with the school suspension program, collaborative relationships were gradually formed between a multitude of agencies and organizations. The school works with the Child Protective Services, Navajo Social Services, Page Policy Department, Arizona Department of Public Safety, Alcoholics Anonymous, Navajo Police, and Lake Powell Institute, to name just a few.

The assistant principal of the school, three counselors and three para-professionals operate the program. The counselors and para-professionals act as case managers and give students as much individual attention as possible. Monthly roundtables, which began as informal gatherings, now serve as an important communication link and case-management forum.

Participating Partners (Provo, Utah). Provo School District, one of the seven pilot sites for the Utah Early Intervention for School Success Program, chose four of its most at-risk schools (based on low SES, mobility, percent minority, and other indicators) to target for improvement. In addition to a case-management system at each site, the district has developed some innovative projects to bring together community resources. For example, it built a partnership with the Parent Resource Center at the local library. This Center provides books and games to families. With the purchase of an old shuttle bus, the school brings the games and books to the homes of the at-risk children. The district also has developed a mentor family program. Families volunteer to help an at-risk family in a variety of ways. For example, they might offer emotional support, provide transportation to support groups or other functions, remind them of important events and dates, and include them in holiday and other festive occasions.

In addition, student nurses at Brigham Young University fulfill their practicum responsibilities at the school. They provide health assessment, guidance in nutrition and hygiene and make referrals. The district also has a parenting training component and uses aides in the classroom. Other collaborative efforts include senior citizens' groups who tutor parents and children. The coordination function is served through an inter-community council which brings together agencies to discuss policy issues and deal with cases.

Project LEARN, (Phoenix, Arizona). The Local Educational Assistance Resource Network, Project LEARN, is a collaborative of 26 service organizations, coordinated through the United Way Chapter in Phoenix. These organizations have come together to provide services at four school sites, identified as especially at-risk. The organizations

provide resources, staff, transportation, facilities, funding, ideas and time in order to provide effective social, health, academic and other services to the at-risk population. Their focus has been on health care, parent support, counseling services, an emergency assistance fund, childcare, and English as a second language. The agencies have set up cooperative funding arrangements and have opened lines of communication with the schools, teachers, and families.

Southwest Community Network (Avondale, Arizona). The Southwest Community Network was organized to improve the coordination and availability of services to people in Maricopa County. The county is made up of small towns with high percentages of minority and low-income populations. The Network, itself a consortium of various social service agency staff, organizes and supports collaborative projects. Through the Network, community groups can build partnerships and integrate projects. For example, the Avondale Neighborhood Housing Service was awarded a contract to build several new low-income homes. In collaboration with the high school, a Building Trades Program was developed. Students are paid to work on the homes and are taught a skill and learn work values. The district received funds to buy equipment for the project. The program has expanded to the refurbishment old homes.

Other examples of projects organized through the network include a behavioral health center which offers low-cost counseling services but also serves a case-management role through which youth find support from other organizations. Another project is a demonstration site for a national project which seeks to gather data on family intervention programs. This has an early intervention focus and involves the entire family in the provision of direct services through a case-management approach.

Summary. As these program profiles illustrate, school-community collaboration can take on a variety of forms. They are not built on specific models; rather they are based on the needs of the local environment, an assessment and review of "what works best" in a given situation. Approaches must be flexible for collaboration to succeed and must take into consideration local circumstances. In rural settings, formation of partnerships between the schools and the community is important to addressing the needs of the children, as well as the survival of the community.

Further Reading: An Annotated Bibliography

Failure by Fragmentation, S. Gardner, (Fall, 1989). In this article, Sid Gardner examines the problems associated with the current fragmented system of services aimed at helping today's youth. He explores the reasons behind our currently fragmented system which he argues stems from the "isolated program mentality" — our need to address each problem as it arises, therefore creating a system of disjointed programs. Gardner contends that a network of services set up as a collaborative effort is imperative in addressing the pressing needs of today's children. He views collaboration in three steps: 1) "hooks" link children in several programs, 2) "glue" brings together agencies as one system, but separate parts, and 3) "joint ventures" brings collaboration one step further and forges partnerships between and among agencies. (To order call: California Tomorrow at (415) 441-7631)

The Forgotten Half: Pathways to Success for America's Youth and Young Families, William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship, (1988). This report examines the Forgotten Half, 16 to 24 year-olds who are unlikely to attend college. In doing so, the report calls attention to ways of connecting individuals with their families and the community. This includes creating systems of coordinated services. (To order write: W.T. Grant Foundation, Suite 301, 1001 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20036-5541)

Improving Children's Services, Overcoming Barriers, Creating Opportunities, M.W. Kirst, (April, 1991). Kirst argues that "a complete overhaul" of the current system of services is needed for children to receive adequate services. He envisions the school as one of the many components of this integrated system. In calling for a more efficient system, Kirst examines the "roots" of the current pattern of service delivery, and offers short-term strategies to begin the improvement process. He argues that these short-term goals must be part of the long-term focus on "overhauling" the system. (Phi Delta Kappan, Volume 72, Number 8, pp. 615-618)

Linking Schools and Community Services: A Practical Guide, E.R. Robinson & A.Y. Mastny, (1989). This is a comprehensive guide intended for those who are in the process of developing plans for interagency collaboration. The guide describes the planning process including how to generate participation, addresses common issues (e.g., confidentiality, parental consent, and funding), and reviews the need for and process of evaluation. Sample invitational letters, surveys, referral and consent forms, and funding sources are provided in appendixes. A resource directory, which accompanies this guide is also available. (To order call or write: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, Center for Community Education, School of Social Work, 73 Easton Avenue, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903, (201) 932-7374 ext. 7798)

Policies for Children with Multiple Needs, S.B. Heath & M.W. McLaughlin, (1989). This is a chapter in the *Conditions of Children in California*, a report distributed by Policy Analysis for California education (PACE). The PACE report seeks to illustrate the quality of life for children in California. In doing so, it synthesizes not readily available information, highlights gaps in data and offers recommendations in policy. In their chapter, Heath and McLaughlin examine the multiple needs of children and how they are underserved in the current system of services. They point out the lack of early intervention and coordination. In addition, they discuss the gap between policy and demographic changes and the need for a more comprehensive examination and development of a system of services. (To order send $20.00 to: PACE, School of Education, University of California, Berkeley, California 94720)

The Same Client: The Demographics of Education and Service Delivery Systems, H.L. Hodgkinson, (1989). In this report, Hodgkinson, the author of All One System — a study of the interrelated educational system — examines a larger interrelated system that of the multitude of bureaucracies serving families, children, and individuals. He reviews four main types of organizations: health care, housing, transportation, and corrections. He argues that it is time that these agencies, serving "the same client," begin to communicate and develop interdependent relationships in order to improve service delivery. In discussing each agency, he examines their services, service delivery system, clients and implications for education. (To order send $12.00 to: Publications Department, Institute for Educational Leadership, Center for Demographic Policy, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 310, Washington, D.C. 20036)

Streamlining Interagency Collaboration for Youth At Risk: Issues for Educators, G.P. Guthrie & L.F. Guthrie, (1990). This paper offers guidelines for streamlining interagency collaboration efforts. Schools today are becoming super-agencies, with broad-ranging social service responsibilities being placed on already overburdened educators. What is urgently needed is collaboration among all agencies, including schools, to develop a coordinated, case-managed, child-centered system that efficiently serves children and their families. This document offers advice on needs assessment, information gathering, and developing a careful plan. (To order send $6.00 to: Far West Laboratory, Publications Department, 730 Harrison Street, San Francisco, California 94107)

What It Takes: Structuring Interagency Partnerships to Connect Children and Families with Comprehensive Services, A.I. Melaville & M.J. Blank, (1991). This monograph is divided into three parts. The first examines the flaws of the current system of services and describes what a comprehensive, preventative, and collaborative system would entail. The authors argue that integration of services must move beyond cooperation toward more elaborate collaboration. Part two of the monograph consists of a cross section of interagency initiatives to illustrate the various efforts underway. The third section provides guidelines for individuals, such as policy makers and practitioners, to begin their own process of collaboration. Descriptions of projects and national organizations are included in an appendix and provide information for further research. (To order send $3.00 to: Education and Human Services Consortium, c/o IEL, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 310, Washington, D.C. 20036-5541)

Within Our Reach: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage, L.B. Schorr, (1988). This book is a comprehensive examination of service delivery options that demonstrate effective ways to "break the cycle of disadvantage" within which many children are caught. In so doing, Schorr reviews health care, social service and educational programs and policies, and documents successful strategies for addressing the needs of disadvantaged families and children. Some of the promising practices she highlights include: comprehensive services, accessibility, continuity, timeliness, and opportunities to move beyond the need for assistance. (To order write: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10103)

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Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development serves the four-state region of Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah, working with educators at all levels to plan and carry out school improvements. The mission of FWL is to assist educators in the region by linking them with colleagues; sharing information, expertise and innovative practices; and providing technical assistance to build local capacity for continued self-improvement.

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